IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Previously presented) A synthetic HCV IRES nucleic acid molecule having the sequence of SEQ ID NO. 1.

2. (Previously presented) A synthetic HCV IRES ribonucleic acid molecule having the sequence of SEQ ID NO. 4.

3-4. (Cancelled).

5. (Previously presented) A polynucleotide comprising the nucleic acid molecule of Claim 1.

6. (Original) A recombinant vector comprising the polynucleotide of claim 5.

7. (Previously presented) A method of synthesizing the ribonucleic acid molecule of Claim 2 by an in vitro transcription method.

8. (Previously presented) A method for preparing a purified ribonucleic acid (RNA) molecule, comprising the steps of:
(a) allowing the polynucleotide of Claim 5 with T7 promoter sequences at its 5' end, to anneal to T7 RNA polymerase promoter primers and to be transcribed in vitro by T7 RNA polymerase in an in vitro transcription reaction to form an RNA molecule, and
(b) separating said RNA molecule from the transcription reaction to obtain the purified ribonucleic acid molecule.

9. (Previously presented) A method for making a recombinant vector comprising the step of inserting the polynucleotide of claim 5 into a vector.

10. (Cancelled).

11. (Previously presented) An antiviral composition comprising the ribonucleic acid molecule of Claim 2 optionally admixed with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, diluent, excipient or adjuvant.

12. (Previously presented) A method of manufacturing an antiviral composition for treating liver cirrhosis or hepatocellular carcinoma caused by hepatitis C virus, said method comprising admixing the ribonucleic acid molecule of claim 2 with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, diluent, excipient or adjuvant.

13. (Previously presented) An HCV IRES ribonucleic acid molecule comprising a fragment consisting of the sequence of SEQ ID No. 5.

14. (Cancelled).

15. (Currently amended) A method for inhibiting HCV IRES mediated translation, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) introducing into a person an agent capable of binding to the ribosomal protein S5; and

(b) allowing said agent to reduce the binding of the 40S ribosomal subunit to the HCV IRES, thereby inhibiting HCV IRES mediated translation.

wherein said agent is a molecule selected from the group consisting of polynucleotide having the sequence of SEQ ID No. 1 and polynucleotide having the sequence of SEQ ID No. 4.

16-18. (Cancelled).

19. (Previously presented) A synthetic nucleic acid molecule consisting essentially of the sequence of SEQ ID NO. 1.

20. (Previously presented) A synthetic ribonucleic acid molecule consisting essentially of the sequence of SEQ ID NO. 4.